



# MAGIC VALLEY

BLAINE, CAMAS, CASSIA, GOODING, JEROME, LINCOLN, MINIDOKA, & TWIN FALLS COUNTIES

## LABOR FORCE & EMPLOYMENT

As seen in Magic Valley Table 1, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the Magic Valley LMA was 3.7 percent for March 2001. This was one-tenth of percentage point less than February 2001 and five-tenths of a percentage point less than March 2000.

The *Civilian Labor Force* was 2.4 percent higher in March 2001 than in March 2000 and employment continues to be very strong. Over the past year, *Food Processing* had a 2.6 percent increase. Some of the notable decreases in the last year include an 8.0 percent decline in *Retail Trade*, a 12.5 percent decrease in *Manufacturing-Durable Goods*, and a 3.5 percent drop in *Wholesale Trade*. Some new eating establishments opened in Twin Falls in the past 60 days, and these helped contribute to modest gains in the *Services* sectors from last year. Overall, unemployment remains at very low levels and job creation continues.

## SPECIAL TOPIC:

### South Central Agricultural Outlook

The outlook for agriculture in all of Idaho and the South Central region shows a little improvement in some areas, but an uncertain future in most of the agricultural sectors. The bright spot so far has been in cattle and milk production. The supply of beef in the nation and the world has been dwindling, keeping prices stable. The outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in Europe and the subsequent destruction of many cattle has caused prices to increase dramatically. After months of sagging milk prices, consumer demand for dairy products is starting to outweigh industry production. According to a report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Services, March Class III milk prices came in at \$11.42 per hundredweight, up \$1.15 from February and up \$1.88 from a year before. The outlook is for a continued price rise. Other meat industries including sheep,

Magic Valley Table 1: Labor Force & Employment  
Twin Falls, Jerome, and Gooding counties

	March 2001*	Feb 2001	March 2000	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
<b>Seasonally Adjusted</b>					
Civilian Labor Force	49,090	49,060	47,930	0.1	2.4
Unemployment	1,830	1,880	2,010	-2.7	-9.0
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.7	3.8	4.2		
Total Employment	47,260	47,180	45,920	0.2	2.9
<b>Unadjusted</b>					
Civilian Labor Force	47,420	47,110	46,350	0.7	2.3
Unemployment	2,080	2,400	2,300	-13.3	-9.6
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.4	5.1	5.0		
Total Employment	45,340	44,710	44,050	1.4	2.9
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
<b>Nonfarm Payroll Jobs**</b>					
<b>Goods-Producing Industries</b>	6,740	6,620	6,810	1.8	-1.0
Mining & Construction	1,860	1,760	1,870	5.7	-0.5
Manufacturing	4,880	4,860	4,940	0.4	-1.2
Durable Goods	770	770	880	0.0	-12.5
Nondurable Goods	4,110	4,090	4,060	0.5	1.2
Food Processing	3,110	3,090	3,030	0.6	2.6
All Other Nondurable Goods	1,000	1,000	1,030	0.0	-2.9
<b>Service-Producing Industries</b>	30,070	30,010	30,190	0.2	-0.4
Transportation, Comm., & Utilities	2,970	2,980	2,820	-0.3	5.3
Wholesale Trade	2,220	2,220	2,300	0.0	-3.5
Retail Trade	7,350	7,330	7,990	0.3	-8.0
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	1,390	1,440	1,400	-3.5	-0.7
Services	8,600	8,600	8,370	0.0	2.7
Government Administration	3,680	3,650	3,450	0.8	6.7
Government Education	3,860	3,790	3,860	1.8	0.0

\*\*Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

hogs, and poultry also look fairly stable. If an economic downturn occurs, seafood and fish demand typically goes down due to higher prices for these products. This could have an impact on the Magic Valley's aquaculture industry. Price forecasts for sugar beets and potatoes remain very poor with huge surpluses and decreased demand. Some help may come from decreased crop plantings due to acres taken out of production by Idaho Power Company's power buyback. In addition, many farmers are switching to shorter growing season crops such as small grains and hay because of severe drought conditions but the effect will be small. Dry bean plantings are expected to be 17 percent lower nationwide, and this might stabilize a downward trend in those prices.

The outlook for farm labor should be about average to slightly below average, but some farmers are not hiring laborers this year because of the power buyback or farm liquidation. The Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker season is also not expected to be as long because of severe drought condi-

tions and many farmers will, of necessity, be through with their irrigation season earlier than normal.

This last winter saw the second worst water year since record keeping began (1977 was the worst year). Salmon Falls drainage and the Magic Reservoir irrigation areas are expected to have a maximum of 30-45 days of irrigation water. This has spurred Blaine and Lincoln counties to apply for drought disaster area assistance. All of this, coupled with a proposed rate hike by Idaho Power Company, makes farming an uncertain prospect in the Magic Valley in 2001.

## AREA DEVELOPMENTS

### Twin Falls County

- Many South Central Idaho farmers participated in Idaho Power Company's power buyback program. In the entire region, 56,702 acres out of a total irrigated area of 1,117,011 acres will be taken out of production to save power costs. This represents 5.08 percent of all irrigated farmland in seven South Central counties. Some farmers in Idaho will receive as much as fifteen cents per kilowatt-hour of energy saved. Farmers who could cut at least 100,000-kilowatt hours of electricity during this year's irrigation season were eligible. In total, 154,439 acres in Idaho will be affected, saving Idaho Power nearly one-half billion-kilowatt hours.
- Micron CEO Steve Appleton was the featured speaker at the Twin Falls Chamber of Commerce First Friday luncheon on April 6<sup>th</sup> at the Turf Club in Twin Falls. Mr. Appleton later participated in a round table discussion with local business leaders at the College of Southern Idaho. The discussion was mainly centered on economic development and how the Twin Falls-Jerome region could recruit viable businesses into the area.

### Blaine, Camas, Jerome, Gooding & Lincoln Counties

- SkyWest Airlines announced that it plans to increase the number of its daily round-trip flights between Hailey and Salt Lake City, Utah from seven to eleven flights. The new flights will be from June to September because of Sun Valley's heavy summer tourist traffic and its increased popularity as a summer recreation area. The new flights will begin June 2001.
- Governor Kempthorne has signed four new dairy bills that will have an impact on Idaho dairy operations:
  1. *Senate Bill 1040 requires dairies that sell animal waste for application onto cropland to provide the*

*buyers' names and addresses in their nutrient management plans.*

2. *Senate Bill 1067 requires a new or expanding dairy to provide evidence to state regulators and county planners of an adequate water right before a site or milk permit can be issued.*
  3. *House Bill 211 allows a county to ask the state to form a site advisory team when trying to permit a new operation.*
  4. *House Bill 262, also known as the Odor Management Act, gives the Department of Agriculture the authority to control dairy odors through regulation of waste lagoon construction and the development of odor management programs.*
- St. Benedicts Hospital in Jerome will install a new CT Scanner this month. This new Spiral CT Scanner will be the area's most advanced type of CT radiological equipment. The new scanner uses a scanning technique called "Helical Scan" to obtain outstanding clinical results. It is used to perform radiological scans along the entire body axis including scans of veins, organs, musculoskeletal and pulmonary systems. Its diagnostic abilities will be used for everything from traumatic injuries, appendicitis, bowel and bronchial obstructions, to all types of vascular studies.

### Cassia and Minidoka Counties

- A celebration was held in Burley to commemorate the opening of the new four-lane bridge over the Snake River. The project, which has taken many months to complete, was celebrated with a parade, fireworks, and boats on the river. Governor Dirk Kempthorne was present to cut the ribbon and show his support for the project. The new bridge will help traffic flow into and out of downtown Burley and make travel safer and easier.

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Gregory Rogers, Labor Market Analyst  
771 N. College Road, Twin Falls, ID 83303  
(208) 736-3000  
E-mail: [grogers@labor.state.id.us](mailto:grogers@labor.state.id.us)